DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 598 JC 990 263

AUTHOR	Giles, Ray, Ed.
TITLE	Board Focus, 1997-1998.
INSTITUTION	Community Coll. League of California, Sacramento.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	20p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT	Board Focus; v3 n1-4 Spr 1997-Spr 1998
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administration; *Administrator Responsibility; Administrators; Boards of Education; *Community Colleges; Educational Administration; Educational Finance; Educational Objectives; *Governance; *Trustees; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	California Community Colleges

ABSTRACT

These four consecutive issues of the quarterly newsletter, "Board Focus," distributed by the Community College League of California, are dated spring, summer and fall 1997, and spring 1998. The spring 1997 issue discusses the "town vs. gown" conflict, which entails trustees balancing their obligations to operate the college on behalf of the community with the need to earn the respect and support of the faculty and administrators. The spring issue also advocates trustees as the community college officials most suitable to maintain relations with the California Assembly, Senate, and federal government. In summer 1997, Board Focus talks about trustee rights and responsibilities, the dynamics between trustees and district CEOs, and the participation of trustees in regional institutional accreditation. Fall 1997 Board Focus looks at civility and conflict in the boardroom, the role of student trustees in offering important insights on district mission, and the pros and cons of odd or even election years. In Spring 1998, the publication discusses board development as it relates to the public's increased demand for institutional accountability. Also included is an article on campaign finance and community colleges, with a discussion on the impact of Proposition 208 on the nature of campaign funding. Spring 1998's issue contains a survey, intended for reader response, regarding actions taken by various school boards to foster board and trustee education. This issue also provides tips for board presentations. (AS)

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ED 430 598

Board Focus
Volume 3, Numbers 1-4
1997-1998

Ray Giles
Editor

Community College League of California

JC 990 363

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BOARD FOCUS

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

SPRING 1997

Town and Gown: The Balancing Act of Community College Trustees

By Lindsay Conner

Town Vs. Gown. It's a conflict as old as higher education, and as new as today's board meeting.

Locally elected community college trustees stand at ground zero of this conflict, because we have one foot in each camp. We can't be public leaders without the respect of voters, and we can't be college leaders without the respect of faculty and administrators.

Lindsay Conner
Member, Board of Trustees
Los Angeles Community College District

What happens when these forces are at odds? In districts where college employee groups are weak and town opinion leaders are strong, trustees may be tempted to choose the "town" side. Conversely, where employee groups are powerful and town opinion leaders are inattentive, trustees may be tempted to choose the 'gown' side. Either choice may be politicaliy expedient, but it's a mistake—if we want to be real educational leaders.

The answer lies in recognizing the danger of choosing one side or the other. If we try to be all "town", we find ourselves unable to lead the college. The college is too collegial in its operations to simply follow the dictates of a part-time board of outsiders. Power is too diffused among people and groups with their own missions, agendas and lifetime investments to make our wishes self-enforcing. And we'll probably have trouble remaining effective board members—due to both the alienation of campus groups, and our failure to achieve results for the public.

On the other hand, if we try to be all "gown", we fail the fundamental purpose of trusteeship: operating the college on behalf of the community. The public can't literally run the college, so they elect us to be their eyes, ears and hands. They rely on us to ensure the college achieves the level of success the community requires.

If the needs of the people—students, families, businesses and industries—aren't met because we are following the desires of campus groups, the college will lose the public support, partnership and trust without which it becomes a foreign organism in a community. And if that happens, a downward spiral in enrollment, funding and achievement is almost inevitable.

As trustees, we must resolve the conflict by striking a balance between town and gown. The best way to do

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this is to remember that it's a COMMUNITY COLLEGE. Each of those words carries enormous meaning, and we can never lose sight of either. As the name implies, a community college is an inseparable mix of town and gown.

The college cannot be treated as a "community center"—a town meeting place whose primary attribute is its location, and whose staff consists of interchangeable employees who move with each new public fad or fancy. It must be treated as a college—an institution of higher learning, whose primary attribute is its people. In this sense, success comes from the dynamic interchange among faculty and students, and the support provided by others in the college family; the college is dependent on the quality and stability of its employees for its character and ability to serve.

Given that fact, our job as trustees must be to nurture the college environment—to invest ourselves in its work and its ceremony, to guide gently and fairly, and to be responsive to those who make the college what it is on a daily basis.

At the same time, the college cannot be treated as an "ivory tower"—an institution unto itself, owned only by its trustees and staff, which teaches whatever its faculty is interested in, and which could be located almost anywhere. It must be treated as a community institution—which is owned by the community and run for the benefit of the community. In this sense, success comes from advancing the unique academic and vocational goals of the community's students; teaching what the students and the community require; and while meeting standards of excellence shared with colleges everywhere, preserving the distinctive focus and orientation which reflects the community it serves.

Given this fact, our job as trustees must be to ensure that the college meets the community's needs—to invest ourselves in the community and remain aware of its needs, to match college policies to the educational, economic, and social circumstances of the community, and to be responsive to the people who pay the bills and legitimately expect excellent service in return.

In sum, our job requires us to maintain the balance of "town" and "gown". It is not always easy. But it is always necessary. That's our challenge—and our mission—as trustees.

Trustee Advocacy Can Make a Difference

By Bonnie Slosson

When community college districts seek to influence members of the California Assembly or Senate or the federal government, there is clearly no better advocate for local districts or the entire community college system than trustees.

As locally elected officials, trustees are able to build effective working relationships with legislators and congressional members because all are working on behalf of the communities they represent. And when legislators are making important legislative and budget decisions affecting community colleges, it is imperative that the voice of trustees and their districts be heard.

How can trustees effectively influence state leaders in Sacramento and Washington, DC?

The first step is for trustees to be willing and prepared to advocate on behalf of their districts and the system. There are just as many advocacy groups out there as there are issues, all competing for attention and financial support. Trustees must be willing to commit their time and talents to working with their chief executive officer in establishing and maintaining an advocacy program.

The second step to effective advocacy is for trustees to build and maintain positive

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

BOARD FOCUS

Effective Trustee Orientation

League Survey Provides Helpful Ideas for Improvements

New trustees seated on a community college board face a formidable task. They must learn about their district's education program and budget priorities. They must learn the basic tenets of policy governance and board leadership. And they must begin to build effective working relations with their fellow board members and the district's CEO.

To help new trustees acclimate to their unique role in the college community, most CEOs and boards provide orientation programs. These programs aim to provide trustees with the information and skills necessary to become contributing members of the leadership team.

A Community College League survey of districts on new trustee orientation found that orientation programs typically involve the district chief executive officer and board chair. Information is provided to new trustees both through discussion and written documents.

The topics most often covered are:

- Trustee roles and responsibilities
- Budgets and the budgeting process
- Legal and fiscal responsibilities
- Board structure and organization
- Policy-making and administration
- CEO/staff/board relations
- Trustee benefits

Interestingly, the survey disclosed that new trustees report receiving much of their information about the history, traditions, values and culture of the institution from sources other than the CEO or board chair, including other board members, faculty, and staff.

The survey demonstrates a need for boards and CEOs to clearly outline the goals of new trustee orientation programs, the information and knowledge new trustees need and how the orientation is designed to meet those goals.

Districts may benefit by developing a checklist or guide that identifies what information will be provided to new trustees. And since every trustee brings different skills and backgrounds to the board, each orientation should be individualized to best meet the new trustee's learning needs.

Orientation Goals

- Helps trustees gain an understanding of what it means to be a trustee, including being a contributing member of a leadership team.
- Provides trustees with the necessary information upon which to base decisions.
- Builds an understanding of the college's history, culture and values.
- Helps establish effective working relationships within the college leadership team.

Two Helpful Resources

- The League's 1997 Trustee Handbook provides a wealth of information on governance, the board-CEO relationship, planning and monitoring and legal and fiscal responsibilities. For a copy, call the League at 916-444-8641.
- The Ventura County CCD Governing Board Handbook includes chapters on "*New Trustee Education*" as well as "*Trustee Candidate Orientation*" and "*Student Trustee Candidate Orientation*". The chapters are an excellent aid to districts seeking to establish orientation guidelines. For a copy, contact Barbara Buttner, Director, Governing Board Relations, at 805-654-6412.

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working relationships with state legislators. California community colleges obtain a significant amount of funding from Sacramento. Consequently, state legislators must be a major focal point of local district– and trustee–advocacy efforts.

Building and maintaining a relationship with your state legislators takes time, commitment and common sense. When you visit your state or federal representative, be prepared: Know the budget priorities of your district and the California community colleges. Know your legislator's concerns and priorities and the impact of legislation or budget decisions on your college. Take the legislator's concerns and put a college "spin" on it, explaining how helping the college will help them meet their own political and personal priorities.

Always be courteous and to the point. Know your facts and if you don't, promise to get back with information or answers. And after each office visit, write a thank you note. We all appreciate the courtesy.

Term limits and the rapid turnover of members and staff provide a challenge and an opportunity. Members and staff need more help than ever in understanding the important issues in their districts. That's where you as a trustee can step in and help your college and the California community colleges with effective legislative advocacy.

Check List for Success

Trustees should:

- ✔ Work with the district CEO to establish a coalition or "team" of board members, faculty, staff and students to advocate and to work with the statewide associations.
- ✔ Help recruit community and business leaders to advocate on behalf of your district.
- ✔ Work with the district superintendent to develop and present a unified college position.
- ✔ Build a relationship with your legislators that is maintained year-round, not just when you need something.
- ✔ Include legislative updates as a regular part of board meetings.
- ✔ Keep the League's Legislative Office apprised of your advocacy efforts, especially before and after you see your legislator.

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SUMMER 1997

Trustees Rights and Responsibilities

By Lois Carson

The single most challenge a trustee faces is observing the great divide between governance and administration. The second most challenge is understanding that authority resides, not in any individual trustee, but in the board of trustees seated in a duly constituted meeting. Against these two constant challenges, a treatise on the rights and responsibilities of trustees is helpful.

Administration is easier to grasp because trustees are "hands on" activists who are used to performing concrete actions. Governance and boardsmanship, on the other hand, are abstract concepts and the "doer" trustee is less familiar with the craft of simply making rules to insure that things get done by others.

After 24 years as a trustee, I would advise the new trustee to immediately seek training on governance and boardsmanship. The model of governing I have come to embrace is called Policy Governance. Policy Governance stresses vision, leadership and accountability. It stresses ends and means. The model encourages boards to cast a future vision for the enterprise; to exercise the leadership that will influence others to capture the vision; to stay in constant touch with community (the moral owners of the enterprise); and to forge goals and objectives for the CEO that are built on integrity, accountability, ethics and fair play.

The trustee who does not understand good governance makes the tragic mistake of trying to exercise power that is the province of the board alone. Such behavior incurs the wrath of the balance of the board and the dismay, even disdain, of the staff. Outside the parameters of the board meeting, the trustee is simply a representative of and to the community. Only the chairperson is delegated limited authority outside the board meeting and then only within agreed upon circumstances.

In time, the individual trustee can exert a great deal of influence by teamwork, by contributing unique skills and abilities to the board. Once a reputation is established, the individual can enjoy the power of persuasion. Being a team player does not mean capitulation or submission of one's convictions. The independence of the trustee is reflected in the debate that leads to the vote. It is further reflected in the act of voting one's conscience and conviction.

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Trustees Rights and Responsibilities (CONTINUED)

Assuming the trustee has a firm grip on good governance and boardmanship, the following summary of rights and responsibilities can help the trustee become an asset to the board, the enterprise and the community.

The right to be heard and to fully express a conviction or position.

The responsibility to accept the vote of the majority and support it.

The right to ask questions and expect accurate responses.

The responsibility to observe the confidentiality of the executive sessions.

The right to attend conferences for training and trustee education.

The responsibility to regularly attend and be prepared for every meeting.

The right to make inquiries of the C.E.O. when a sensitive issue arises.

The responsibility to avoid surprising the board and CEO with sensitive issues.

The right to question discussion of inappropriate topics in executive sessions or even to leave if the discussion continues.

The responsibility to report to constituents and get input from them, the moral owners of the enterprise.

Trustees and a New CEO: Dynamics and Responsibilities

By Nancy Davenport

"The most important thing a board does is hire a CEO," and "CEOs are turning over every two or three years." Sound familiar? I suggest that the second statement is a direct result of not enough attention to the first.

Hiring a leader that meets the needs of your District requires more than sending out a boilerplate job announcement and hoping "the cream will rise to the top." The cream may rise, but how will you know if it is the right brand of cream for your situation?

Nancy Davenport
President
Los Rios CCD Board of Trustees

Hiring the right CEO takes hard work by the Board and all constituencies in the District.

Below are steps crucial to hiring and nurturing a new CEO.

Board Responsibilities Prior to Announcement

This is the most critical time. You will be determining what you want/need in a CEO to make the district successful. This analysis must be more objective than deciding you want someone "totally different/exactly like" the last one.

To determine skills/personal qualities required depth soul searching is called for:

- What are your values?
- Short term/long term goals?
- District problems needing resolution?
- Is there a shared vision?
- Have all constituencies participated?

Clear, well-tailored announcements, help you in making a decision and help potential applicants decide if they are "fit" for your district.

Expectations of the Board and CEO

Critical success factors in a relationship are, shared vision and values, agreement about where the District is headed and how to get there. It is incumbent on the board to communicate the vision to the CEO and for the CEO to share what support he/she needs from the board.

Frequent and Open Communication

The real secret to positive Board/CEO relationships is communication. Very quickly after the CEO is hired, you jointly need to decide: How and when

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BOARD FOCUS

Trustees and Regional Institutional Accreditation

By Dr. Judith Watkins

Regional accreditation is the private, non-governmental system of quality assurance to the public and means of institutional improvement for participating colleges. To accomplish that mission, each college assesses itself against standards of good practice in higher education, undergoes an evaluation and recommendations by an external peer review team, receives a determination of its accredited status from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and engages in follow-up on the recommendations from the team, the Commission, and the institutional self study.

The accreditation process requires the participation of all segments of the institution. Trustees need to be appropriately involved throughout that process. Historically, however, many trustees have indicated that they are unsure of where and how to participate. There are three critical arenas in which trustees can, and should, play an active role.

THERE ARE THREE CRITICAL ARENAS IN WHICH TRUSTEES CAN, AND SHOULD, PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE:

Institutional Participation

Professional Participation

Personal Participation

Judith Watkins, Phd
Associate Director, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION: The institutional self-study is an eighteen-month to two year process. Each college organizes itself for the study as it sees fit, but most use committees related to the ten accreditation standards. It is entirely appropriate for trustees to volunteer to serve on committees and not just for the governance and administration committee! During the self study period, progress reports should be made. Ask that they be put on the board agenda. Policies may need review and revision for the institution to document that it meets or exceeds the standards. Finally, the board chairperson will be asked to sign a certification of eligibility, to certify that the self study accurately reflects the condition of the institution, and attest that there was widespread participation in its preparation.

At the time of the evaluation team visit, team members meet with trustees, and if possible, observe a board meeting. After the team visit and the Commission decision about the college's accredited status, trustees continue to be involved by maintaining interest in the institutional recommendations or follow-up which may be required.

PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPATION: Periodically, the Commission reviews its standards of accreditation and issues a new handbook. The chair of the board of trustees receives an invitation for the board to offer suggestions.

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TRUSTEES AND A NEW CEO (CONTINUED)

you will communicate; what and how often does the board want to hear from the CEO; what kind of feedback does the CEO need from the board.

While the above discussion is necessarily brief, however, the ideas are essential for a healthy district.

Board and CEO Relationship to the Organization

Another success factor is helping the entire organization understand that the board and CEO are a team, supporting each other and working together. If your groundwork was done correctly, the various constituencies will already understand where you are going and will feel part of the team.

Periodic "Perception Checks"

One of the secrets of a good relationship is periodic discussions about how things are going. If everyone's perceptions are different it's time to find out why, make corrections or reevaluate activities.

TRUSTEES AND REGIONAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION (CONTINUED)

Drafts of revised standards are also circulated for review. In California, the CCCT selects representatives to serve on the Commission Selection Committee to screen applicants and name Commission members. CCCT has also produced a Resource Guide for Boards of Trustees to address two standards: Board ethics statements and chief executive officer evaluation.

PERSONAL PARTICIPATION: ACCJC is the only regional accrediting body which has a trustee on each evaluation team. The Commission believes that trustee involvement on teams affords a personal and professional opportunity to trustees which is not available in any other setting, and the contribution to the institutions is immense. Trustees willing to volunteer their time and expertise are always welcome to apply to ACCJC to be part of the evaluator pool.

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BOARD FOCUS

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

FALL 1997

Civility & Conflict in the Boardroom

By Maria Nieto Senour

One of the most important dynamics in any relationship, including that among members of a board of trustees, involves how the individuals in the relationship deal with conflict. A certain amount of conflict is inevitable in any relationship. Most community college boards of trustees, for example, are composed of individuals who tend to have strong convictions and who perceive themselves to be leaders. Differences are bound to emerge among them, in both public and closed sessions.

Maria Nieto Senour
Trustee
San Diego CCD

Many of us are uncomfortable with conflict, some of us to the degree that we even dislike the term "conflict" and prefer to think of it as "differences of opinion" or "disagreements." Whatever the term we prefer to use, airing our differences actually brings with it a number of benefits. It allows more viewpoints to be put on the table for consideration, more potential negative consequences to be explored before an action is taken and more creative ideas to be developed from the interchange of perspectives.

As we know from life experience, however, conflict can also have very negative results. Animosity, resentment and estrangement can be the outcome. Since a certain amount of conflict is, nonetheless, inevitable, the issue of conflict is not how to avoid it, but how to work with it and use it in a productive manner.

Conflict can be handled in a civil manner, if everyone involved is willing to abide by a set of rules or guidelines. All boards need to have a code of ethics which delineates how the board members are to conduct themselves in and outside of meetings, including when differences or tensions emerge. If all members are careful to conduct themselves in a courteous, self-disciplined and responsible manner, meetings will be more civil as well as more efficient.

There are various attitudes and behaviors which board members can display which are likely to foster dissension and thus cause problems. Donald Walker, in his article in AGB Reports (1992) talks about an attitude of "aggressive inquiry" that certain board members adopt in order to demonstrate to the public at large that they are doing their jobs. He

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Civility and Conflict in the Boardroom

There are a few "does" and "don'ts" that can help:

- *Don't read or talk while others are talking, whether it's a member of the public, a staff member or another board member.*

- *Don't roll your eyes or groan when you disagree with what you're hearing.*
- *Obviously, don't yell.*
- *Do insist on respect and dignity from everyone at the meeting.*
- *Do demonstrate good communication skills such as listening intently and making eye contact.*

says that such board members see themselves as protecting the institution from even more hostile outsiders by acting somewhat discontented and aggressive at meetings. He cautions that such behaviors can have a demoralizing effect on the people in the institution and, thus, create a negative result in the institution itself.

Playing favorites among the institution's staff is another conflict promoting behavior. Board members, like all human beings, will naturally be more drawn to some people than to others. There will be fellow board members, administrators or staff members who a trustee may find to be more likable than others, or with whom a trustee will agree philosophically or align politically. It is, nevertheless, important that every board member be as neutral and objective as possible in making decisions, rather than being led by personal preferences.

The role of the board chair is critical when conflict emerges. The first responsibility of the chair is to maintain order. When members of the board are contentious or prone to outbursts, it is up to the chair to see to it that this behavior is brought under control. With some individuals this may be hard to do, but, for the good of the institution, it is necessary. An individual can be gaveled out of order by the chair, or can be told in a calm but firm voice that certain behavior is inappropriate. If the individual continues to be disruptive, the chair may call for a brief recess. Most individuals would be too embarrassed to be the cause of more than one such incident at a meeting.

The chair must insist on courtesy from everyone at a meeting, at the same time, it is equally important that everyone's viewpoints have the opportunity to be expressed. If a board member feels isolated from the rest of the board, or feels that his/her concerns and opinions are not taken seriously, he/she is likely to become difficult to manage at meetings. It is, therefore, very important that board chairs keep open and positive communication with all board members, perhaps especially with those who are not natural allies. This takes time and patience, but the time invested will bring important results.

Board retreats can be very helpful in improving communication when it becomes problematic. A retreat can provide a safe environment in which to express any grievances or request changes in behavior from board members. It may be helpful to bring in an outside expert on effective communication to facilitate the session in an impartial manner.

Good communication fosters positive interpersonal relationships. Research shows that organizations which are characterized by positive interpersonal relationships are more productive, solve problems more quickly, attain higher quality results and have fewer conflicts and subversive activities than are organizations that do not have such positive relationships.

As community college trustees we are entrusted with the welfare of one of our community's most valuable assets. It is, therefore, necessary that we always keep in mind that who we are as persons will add to or detract from the quality of our institutions. A very useful guiding principle is that we must be what we want the institution to be, that is, we must embody in our own attitudes and behaviors those values that we want the institution to reflect.

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BOARD FOCUS

Student Trustees Offer Important Insights on District Mission

By Ray Giles

Twenty years ago–on January, 1978–community college district boards of trustees welcomed to the table a new member of the board, the student trustee. In the intervening years, more than 1,400 California community college students have sat as non-voting members, providing their special "customer" perspective to the debate and decisions of elected boards.

State law gives student trustees the right to "be recognized as a full member of the board," but not to vote. Each local governing board is given the authority to decide whether its student trustee can make motions, cast an "advisory" vote or participate in closed sessions.

Over the past 20 years, student trustees at many districts have been incorporated into board meetings as active participants. Today, half the districts allow the student to make motions and half allow the student to cast an advisory vote. Seventy percent of districts provide some form of compensation for student trustees.

"There would be no community college without the students and we feel they should have an equal role," says San Luis Obispo County trustee Jim Brabeck. His board gives the student trustee the right to make motions, register an advisory vote and, under certain circumstances, attend closed sessions. "We've been blessed with high quality student trustees. All have been exemplary in discharging their duties and representing the student body."

And what are those duties? Says the San Luis Obispo trustee, "They are representing the students but in a broader sense they represent the entire community, as we do. Any issue pertaining to the campus affects the entire community."

Brabeck raises an issue that has been debated for 20 years: Is the role of student trustees to discharge their duties as a trustee who is the student member or as the representative of the students?

The issue is clearly impacted by the fact that most student trustees are elected directly by the student body and serve only one year terms. Says Annette Shamey, a trustee at Santa Monica, "Student trustees represent the constituency that elected them but as the same time they have to look at the larger picture. It's a difficult road to travel."

Some boards make a clear distinction between the student trustee's role and the role of the elected board.

At College of the Sequoias, the student trustee is not allowed to cast an advisory vote or to make motions. Trustee John Zumwalt says until recently the board was dominated by members with 16 to 20 years experience who put minimal stock in the opinion of the student member. He believes "we should

CONTINUED ON PAGE FOUR

Odd or Even Year Elections: Pros and Cons for Both

This month, 28 California community college districts will hold trustee elections and will, most likely, find fewer voters going to the polls than will for next year's general election.

That is not all bad, says San Mateo County CCD Trustee Tullio Bertini. "If you hold your election when the major seats are up, like governor, U.S. Senator and president, community college elections tend to get buried at the bottom of the ballot."

While 28 districts hold elections in odd numbered years, 40 districts go the polls in November of even number years when general elections attract longer ballots and longer voting lines. (Three districts hold elections in April or June.)

Still, Bertini makes a strong case for elections in odd years. "We have only one daily newspaper in our county, which is part of a regional chain that gives us minimal coverage. If we held our board elections during the general elections, we'd get even less coverage than we already do. This way we have an opportunity to be out front and have voters pay attention to community college issues. It's a better shake for the voters."

Some districts–like Desert and El Camino–report they'd prefer to switch from odd numbered year elections to even years in order to save money. General election costs are generally lower because more government entities share the expenses. Desert Trustee Ray House says his district has been told by San Bernardino County it can't switch because the ballot in the general election is already too crowded. The Superintendent's office at the El Camino district gives a similar response. The County of Los Angeles won't allow them to switch.

The State Center district in Fresno did switch from odd numbered year elections to even years in order to reduce costs, according to Trustee Phillip Forhan. "More and more of our local governments –like school boards– were switching to even years which made our costs prohibitive. We saved $100,000 on each election by switching. The downside is that in a general election we do become a secondary issue."

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STUDENT TRUSTEES
(CONTINUED)

probably tap that resource better. Student trustees don't realize they often make more sense on the issues. They assume because the other board members are twice as old they are twice as smart. And that's not always the case."

At Mt. San Jacinto, says Board President Ann Motte, the student trustee's primary role is to report on student body activities. "He is certainly free to give his point of view on any agenda item but he usually doesn't say much. We're responsible for the students and we have the final say. We're the elected representatives of the community."

The Glendale board takes much the same approach, reports Board President Ken Sweetnam. "She keeps us well informed on what students are doing. It's very important. But the elected trustees are legally responsible for what happens."

Rio Hondo, on the other hand, grants the student trustee both an advisory vote and the right to make motions. "We consistently rely on the student to raise issues and concerns that we may overlook," says Trustee Don Jenkins. As an example, he cites planning that took place to revitalize a number of buildings on campus. The student reviewed the plans and recommended steps be taken to improve access to parking. The plans were changed. "I see it like I would if we had a lawyer on the board. They bring a certain perspective that is important to the discussion."

Fred Baker is the student trustee at Citrus and defines his role as representing students, both those presently enrolled and those who will enroll in the future. He resists the notion that his only duty is representing the constituency that elected him. "Part of my role, I believe, is to look at how things are going to be in the years ahead. For example, I supported a proposal to raise parking fees because adequate parking will be important to future students. But I voted against it because the college failed to consult with the associated student board."

A former Ventura County student trustee, Lance Lewis, says student trustees "have the ability to bring a customer perspective to the board table. They can render comment on the usefulness of decisions." The challenge for student trustees, says Lewis, who is in his senior year at UC Santa Barbara, is to "look beyond the student body that elected them. A student trustee has to take into consideration the entire district, not just the student body. I felt I had to be sensitive to administrative issues that most students weren't aware of."

Lewis believes student trustees can be most effective when they "make a concerted effort to be team players and get to know the board, their concerns and issues."

Santa Monica Trustee Shamey urges districts to do more in terms of orienting student trustees, "so they can function effectively within their one-year term. It's incumbent upon us to help. They have a vital role to play and I wouldn't want to do without their participation."

BOARD FOCUS

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

Published three times yearly to provide locally-elected governing board members with information and strategies for effective boardsmanship.

David Viar, Executive Director

Ray Giles, Editor

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

SPRING 1998

Promoting Board Effectiveness

By Carl Cieslikowski, Joey Lasnik, and Edward Valeau

Hartnell Community College District

Board development has become a hot topic of discussion in board rooms all across the country and at national and state conferences. Much of the impetus is derived from the public's increased demand for institutional accountability. Some believe effective boardsmanship is linked to ongoing trustee development.

In California, this has resulted in new accreditation standards that require a well defined program for new member orientation and governing board development. Hartnell, like many districts, is trying to respond to this need.

Hartnell's board consists of seven unique individuals who perceive themselves as leaders in their communities and who are committed to the value of supporting and maintaining a strong community college program. We operate in an environment where activities such as shared governance, communication with diverse communities, personnel issues, limited budgets, federal, state and local legislation requirements are a daily way of life. Working closely with the CEO is essential if the board is to accomplish the myriad of tasks needed to help our institution address the education and workforce needs of our students.

Fortunately, our CEO, whose background in staff development is broadly based, was committed to working with us to implement a board development program. In October 1996, the board identified a small team to work with the CEO in designing a development plan that could be adopted and implemented by the board.

Between October and December of 1996, the team worked to revise a number of drafts related to purpose, elements of needed training, and topics of importance to individual board members. Simultaneously, some board members and our CEO were becoming familiar with Carver's policy governance model through conference attendance, workshops and readings. As a body, the board then reviewed the work of the team and formally adopted its recommended plan. It was a major accomplishment and guaranteed that board development was indeed a part of our emerging culture.

CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO

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Promoting Board Effectiveness

CONTINUED from PAGE ONE

The Plan

The ultimate challenge of a local board is to establish and focus on a workable vision and mission statement that will have the greatest impact on student learning, and to require and produce the desired outcomes. Working from this premise, our primary thrust was directed toward being able to quickly respond to the ever-changing demands of the board's responsibility. Adapting quickly allows for wise management of education and helps the community college district serve its ever-changing communities more creatively.

The proposal for the development plan was quite simple: to develop a series of training sessions designed to enhance the board's ability to carry out its fiduciary and moral responsibilities to the community. We chose several topics to begin our training:

- Carver's Policy Governance Model
- Brown Act
- Board self-evaluations
- Board/CEO relations

We then agreed on a schedule of events that were convenient for all trustees and promoted discussion. Because of our collective familiarity with the work of the Community College League of California and ACCT in the area of board training, we identified several key consultants through The League On Call service (Drs. Cindra Smith, Tom Van Groningen and Mr. Bill Corey) to lead our training and development retreats. We consciously did not choose our CEO to lead the workshops because we wanted him to interact with us as a team member.

At our first retreat, we broadened our fundamental knowledge of Carver's Policy Governance Model. We also identified our "dreams" (visions) for the future of the college. And we compiled an "issue bin," a roster of issues of concern that have subsequently been explored in later retreats. The initial retreat generated a spirited and frank interchange of opinions, ideas and feelings. We have enjoyed good participation at all our workshops.

Other retreats have included examination of board/CEO relations. The board has developed a deepened awareness of the role and responsibilities of the CEO and an appreciation of the strength and understanding of our own CEO. The CEO, as well, developed a deeper understanding of the role, responsibilities, and strength of the board and its individual members.

We believe there are at least six key elements to our trustee development plan: a) openness, flexibility, and opportunities to engage in learning as a team; b) focused discussion on key issues that are of concern to individual board members and the board as a unit; c) freedom to develop topics and respond to issues related to education at the local, state and national level; d) opportunity for our CEO to freely express his ideas on topics, to share his concerns and to work with us on designing a team response to many of our issues which impact his role; e) an organized and sustained process for keeping current on the needs of our students and the communities we serve; and f) the willingness to engage in a dialogue to explore new ideas in a safe, non-threatening, non-political environment.

A knowledgeable, well informed board is in a better position to govern effectively and to support the work of the chief administrator. We owe it to our students and our communities to run our district efficiently. While our effort is a work in progress, we believe our experience has been enriching and has made a difference in the way some of us now think about governance and our effectiveness in working with our CEO and the public. We plan to continue our program and to use it as a springboard as we learn more about our college and the needs of our community.

What Does Your Board Do About Board and Trustee Education?

Do you want to know what other boards and trustees do to educate themselves about their roles and their districts? Help us help you by completing the following survey.

Directions

Please respond to this by checking the appropriate boxes and filling in the blanks. Fax to 916-444-2954 or mail back to the League Office *(this survey can be folded to make a self-mailer).*

Deadline

Please return the survey by May 15, 1998 or bring it to the Trustee Conference.

Person Completing Survey

❑ Trustee ❑ Board Chair ❑ Chancellor/Superintendent

Name _____

District _____

1. Do you have a policy or written statement or plan for board and trustee education?

❑ Yes ❑ No

2. Please check all the components of your local board and trustee education program.

A. Board Study Sessions, Workshops, and Retreats

❑ Study sessions as a part of regular board meetings
How many times per year? _____ Examples of topics: _____
_____

❑ Study sessions or workshops in lieu of business board meetings
How many times per year? _____ Examples of topics: _____
_____

❑ Board retreats
How many times per year? _____ Examples of topics: _____
_____

Outside facilitators are used:
❑ never ❑ occasionally ❑ usually ❑ always

B. The Board Uses the Following Written Materials on Boardsmanship

❑ The League's Trustee Handbook
❑ Local trustee handbook
❑ Other materials (please list) _____
_____

C. Trustees Regularly Attend the Following Conferences

❑ League Trustee Orientation Workshop
❑ League Legislative Conference
❑ Annual League/CCCT Trustee Conference
❑ ACCT Annual Convention
❑ ACCT Regional Trustee Conferences
❑ Attendance at other conferences and conventions

Which ones are best? _____
_____

Please estimate how much money is budgeted for trustee conference and travel.
Per trustee $_____ For the board as a whole $ _____ Support provided as needed $ _____
How many trustees on your board attend at least one conference per year?
❑ None ❑ One or two ❑ Most ❑ All

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This survey can be folded to make a self-mailer.

D. Other Trustee Education Activities

- ❑ Information sessions for newly-elected or appointed trustees
  - ❑ Include all members of the board ❑ For new trustees only
- ❑ College/campus tours and or visits to programs
- ❑ Mentoring of new trustees by experienced trustees
- ❑ Other _____

3. What are the three most effective methods for board and trustee education?

_____

_____

_____

4. How are board and trustee education needs identified?

- ❑ Individual trustees
- ❑ Chancellor/Superintendent
- ❑ Board as a whole
- ❑ Board chair
- ❑ Board committee
- ❑ Other _____

5. Who has primary responsibility for designing your trustee and board education program?

- ❑ Chancellor/Superintendent
- ❑ Board as a whole
- ❑ Board chair
- ❑ Board committee
- ❑ League and CCCT
- ❑ Other _____

6. Who has primary responsibility for implementing your trustee and board education programs?

- ❑ Chancellor/Superintendent
- ❑ Board chair
- ❑ Board as a whole
- ❑ Ad hoc board committee
- ❑ Individual trustees
- ❑ Other _____

(Please fold here for mailing.)

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Please place stamp here

LOCAL TRUSTEE EDUCATION SURVEY

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE

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Campaign Finance and Community Colleges

Staggering sums of money are raised and spent on California election campaigns, particularly in even-numbered years. In the 1993-94 round of state elections, for example, candidates received over $196 million in contributions. Voters ask where that money comes from, who benefits from giving and receiving it, and what public policies are affected as a result.

In an effort to restrict the influence of special interests and "big money," voters in the November 1996 election approved Proposition 208, a campaign finance reform measure supported by public interest groups such as California Common Cause and the League of Women Voters.

Among other provisions, Proposition 208 established strict contribution limits, banned transfers from one candidate to another, and created a powerful incentive for many candidates to accept voluntary spending limits. It also banned contributions from lobbyists and created fund-raising "black-out" periods of six months for local campaigns and 12 months for state campaigns.

In community college districts with fewer than 100,000 residents, individual contributions were limited to $100. For districts with 100,000 or more residents, the limit was $250. If the board adopted voluntary spending limits, the contribution limits doubled for any candidates who accepted them, and they were entitled to a diamond (♦) symbol next to their names on the ballots.

The impact of accepting voluntary spending limits was even more pronounced for candidates for state office. They are not entitled to candidate statements absent Proposition 208. Suddenly, they gained access to candidate statements–with photographs–and could even have them for free if they accepted the limits.

Candidates for local nonpartisan offices such as community college trustees have the right to candidate statements - without photographs - but must pay for them. Proposition 208 extended no free privileges. But given that most candidates for community college districts spend between $5,000 and $15,000 on their campaigns, they were expected to accept spending limits, even without the free statements.

Proposition 208 had such a profound impact on the nature of political campaigns it was immediately challenged by political participants ranging from the California ProLife Council to labor unions to the Democratic and Republican parties.

After a long and complicated trial, federal district court Judge Lawrence Karlton on January 6 struck down the contribution limits as an unconstitutional restriction on political speech. The low contribution limits, he ruled, burdened candidates' ability to communicate effectively with their voters. He enjoined the initiative in its entirety from being enforced. But he instructed the state's Fair Political Practices Commission to take the matter to the California State Supreme Court to determine what portions could be salvaged and which might be reformed.

Candidates and election administrators convinced the FPPC to avoid any effort to restore some parts of the initiative and fix others before the June primary election. Candidates must know now, they argued, which rules are in effect. Accordingly, the FPPC appealed the decision to the federal Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, and Judge Karlton agreed to stay his order instructing the FPPC to seek action in the state's high court.

Stated simply, Proposition 208 is null and void for the moment–as if it never existed. Eventually, the federal appeals court, even the US Supreme Court might rule otherwise. For the moment, the only campaign finance laws that affect community college trustees are those already in existence. Candidates may raise and spend unlimited amounts on their 1998 campaigns, but those amounts must be meticulously documented and disclosed in accordance with the Political reform act.

Deborah Seiler is Director of Customer Relations for a major election-services firm, Sequoia Pacific Systems. She edits a monthly elections newsletter, THE SEILER REPORT, *and is a former FPPC Commissioner.*

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Tips for Board Presentations

By Stephen Epler

Superintendent/President, Yuba College

The opportunity to present programs, staff, and students to the board is extremely valuable. This opportunity allows us to better inform this important group regarding specific programs within the college. It also helps set a tone for the college as a whole. These presentations help not only the board to focus on the ultimate outcome of our organizational existence–student learning–but they also serve as a means by which we can acknowledge our own successes as staff members of the college. Furthermore, through our presentations to the board, we can help inform not only the board but also the media, and thus the public at large.

To assist in insuring the success of these board presentations, the following tips are provided:

- The presentation by staff members should last between ten and twelve minutes and absolutely no longer than fifteen minutes. The value that can be gained in a presentation is more than offset by overly-lengthy presentations. The question-and-answer period following the presentation does not count in this time limit, since that is under the board's control and could go on for a number of minutes.
- In gauging what material to present, make an effort to describe the "big picture." This provides an overall context for your presentation. That is, describe how your program or service fits within the mission and function of the community college.
- Keep the presentation simple. You might ask, "What is it I want the board to remember a week or two after my presentation?" Presentations that are cluttered with detail without focusing on only one or two themes tend to be quickly forgotten.
- If possible, try to focus on a college-wide perspective, i.e., on all campuses and centers of the college (unless your presentation is site specific). The board appreciates this broad perspective.
- Avoid acronyms used in the profession. Terms used everyday by faculty and staff may not be familiar to trustees. In written materials that you provide, if you use acronyms or technical terms, please spell them out.

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Local Trustee Education Survey inside

DEADLINE MAY 15

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